

Message Text

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43

ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5008

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EXDIS

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TAGS: PFOR, PINT, KS

SUBJECT: CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: A. STATE 157129 B. STATE 157252 C. SEOUL 4107

D. SEOUL 477R

1. SEPTELS WILL FURNISH DATA ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES REQUESTED REFTELS. THIS MESSAGE CONTAINS MATERIAL WHICH DEPT MAY IN ITS DISCRETION WISH TO DRAW UPON IN RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS BASED ON NUMBERED PAA 2 OF CONGRESSMAN FRASER'S LETTER OF JULY 17 REGARDING REPRESENTATIONS BY US OFFICIALS TO ROKG WITH RESPECT TO VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

2. IN ACCORDANCE DEPT INSTRUCTIONS, ON JUNE 26 DCM GAVE VICE FONMIN TEXT OF FAA SECTION 32 AND ORAL RUNDOWN OF BACKGROUND AGAINST WHICH THIS ACTION BEING TAKEN, WITH EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ASPECTS OF POLITICAL PRISONER ISSUE AS DEFINED BY UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. AS REPORTED REF C, VICE FONMIN IMMEDIATELY GRASPED IMPLICATIONS OF THIS APPROACH AND PROMISED TO REPORT TO FONMIN. VICE FONMIN AND OTHERS HAVE ASSURED EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT APPROACH WAS REPORTED TO APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES AND THAT IMPLICATIONS WERE BEING STUDIED. WHEN SUBSEQUENTLY QUERIED AS TO ROKG REACTION, VICE FONMIN REPLIED THAT SUBJECT WAS A "BIG HEADACHE" AND ADDED THAT ROKG

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"DOING BEST WE CAN FOR DEMOCRACY." BEYOND THAT, ROKG

MADE NO OFFICIAL RESPONSE UNTIL JULY 23 WHEN FOREIGN MINISTER DISCUSSED CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS WITH AMBASSADOR AND STATED ROKG VIEW THAT SECTION 32 NOT APPLICABLE IN CASE OF KOREA (REF D).

3. OVER CONSIDERABLE PERIOD OF TIME, AMBASSADOR AND HIS SENIOR STAFF HAVE AT EACH STEP OF WAY DISCUSSED WITH ROKG LEADERS AND OTHERS IN POSITION OF INFLUENCE, DEVELOPING CRITICISM WITHIN US PRESS, ACADEMIC AND CONGRESSIONAL CIRCLES OVER SEVERITY WITH WHICH ROKG HAS HANDLED POLITICAL DISSENT. CONVERSATIONS HAVE AT VARIOUS TIMES DEALT WITH CHARGES FROM THESE SOURCES REGARDING REPRESSIVE NATURE OF EMERGENCY MEASURES THEMSELVES AND UNFAVORABLE AURA SURROUNDING IDEA OF TRIALS BY COURTS MARTIAL; WITH QUESTIONABLE ASPECTS OF ROKG CASE FOR COMMUNIST CONSPIRACY INVOLVING YOUTHFUL STUDENTS, CHRISTIAN LEADERS, AND RESPECTED WRITERS, STATESMEN AND ACADEMICS; WITH ADVERSE REACTION TO RESURRECTION OF OLD CHARGES AGAINST KIM TAE-CHUNG; WITH REACTION TO ARREST AND TRIAL OF FORMER PRESIDENT YUN PO-SUN AND BISHOP CHI; AND IN PARTICULAR, BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER DEATH SENTENCES WERE PASSED, WITH REPUGNANCE WITH WHICH CIVILIZED WORLD WOULD VIEW SENTENCES OF SUCH SEVERITY.

4. THESE DISCUSSIONS HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT IN THE COURSE OF NORMAL INFORMAL EXCHANGES AS ROKG BEGAN TO RECOGNIZE AND BE CONCERNED ABOUT DAMAGE IT WAS DOING TO ITS INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION, EMBARRASSEMENT IT WAS CAUSING ITS FRIENDS, AND DANGER IT WAS COURTING OF LOSING SUPPORT AND AROUSING ACTIVE OPPOSITION IN IMPORTANT SEGMENTS OF AMERICAN OPINION IN PARTICULAR. WE HAVE DILIGENTLY AND REGULARLY SOUGHT TO INTERPRET INTERNATIONAL AND ESPECIALLY AMERICAN REACTIONS TO DEVELOPMENTS IN ROKG, MOST SPECIFICALLY WHEN QUESTIONED ABOUT THESE MATTERS BY KOREAN OFFICIALS.

5. IN THESE DISCUSSIONS, WE HAVE AVOIDED ANYTHING THAT WOULD GIVE ROKG BASIS FOR CLAIMING INTERFERENCE IN ITS DOMESTIC AFFAIRS AND NO SUCH CHARGE HAS EVER BEEN MADE.

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DISCUSSIONS HAVE ALL BEEN PRIVATE AND IN BRIEFING VISITORS, INCLUDING CONGRESSMEN, WE HAVE MADE EFFORT TO GIVE BALANCED PRESENTATION OF CURRENT KOREAN SCENE. WE HAVE URGED AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS AND OTHER VISITORS TO SEE ROKG OFFICIALS AND HAVE IN SOME CASES MADE APPOINTMENTS FOR THEM SO THAT THEY COULD GET THE OFFICIAL KOREAN VIEWPOINT. WE HAVE NOT, ON THE OTHER HAND, GIVEN EITHER ROKG OR OTHERS WITH WHOM DOMESTIC

DEVELOPMENTS HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED ANY GROUNDS FOR BELIEVING THAT EMBASSY OR USG CONDONES REPRESSIVE ACTIONS ROKG HAS TAKEN. THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC COMMENT BY THE EMBASSY ON ROK INTERNAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS, OTHER THAN THAT CONFIRMING STATEMENTS MADE IN WASHINGTON BY OFFICIAL SPOKESMEN. IN ACCORDANCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS WE HAVE NOT EXERTED PRESSURE, PUBLICLY OR PRIVATELY, ON THE ROKG CONCERNING THE DOMESTIC SITUATION.
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